

White sharks spotted here?

Two unconfirmed reports of sharks on beach this week

By Susanna Sheehan

Clipper Editor

The ever-present parental warnings to children at the beach of 'never swim alone' and 'don't swim out too far' now have a few more cautions to go with them: 'never swim near seals,' 'never swim near baitfish' and 'don't wear anything shiny in the ocean.'

These new warnings come from Duxbury Harbormaster Don Beers after there were two unconfirmed sightings of great white sharks off Duxbury Beach recently.

The first sighting was called in by a resident on Ocean Road North off Duxbury Beach on Sunday around 7 p.m.

"They said there appeared to be a fin about a quarter mile off shore," Beers said. "We dispatched a boat but we found nothing. The report was that it was going north from the resident beach to Plum Hills. We put out the yellow flag and said to swim at your own risk and use caution."

"We do believe there was some kind of animal in the water, but we couldn't find it," he added. "This was out way too far."

The second unconfirmed shark sighting was also off Ocean Road North and came in around 3 p.m. Monday. The sightings have made local television news.

Beers said his officers are handing out notices to beach goers about the possibility of sharks in the water off Duxbury Beach. They give some tips on how to stay safe: swimmers should not swim in the early morning or at night, times when sharks are more active. If beachgoers see a seal in the water or baitfish jumping and breaking the surface, they should not go swimming.



**Duxbury Harbormaster Don Beers
with the shark monitoring buoy.**

File photo

Beers said that people can swim at the beach, they just have to be aware and careful.

"This is the only wilderness that you go into armed with flip flops and a beach towel," he said. "It doesn't mean we can't go swimming, it just means that these animals are around."

Beers said that as of last Wednesday, the last time he received data, no tagged white sharks had pinged the monitoring buoy near the first crossover at Duxbury Beach, although there was one spotted by a reliable source in Plymouth about a week and a half ago. There have also been unconfirmed shark sightings off Saquish and near buoy #6 in Plymouth channel.

Every 90 seconds the shark monitoring buoy pings out a code. When a tagged shark swims near, the receiver logs the time and date of when the tag went by. The data from tagged sharks is downloaded for research and analysis to gain a better understanding of shark behavior patterns. The buoy is one of several dozen shark receivers funded by the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy that the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries has installed along the coast.

Last year, the first white shark was confirmed off Duxbury Beach on July 17 and there was one that "hung around" the area at the end of July, Beers said. State police closed Duxbury Beach for an hour on August 25, 2015 when their helicopter observed a 12 to 14-foot Great White Shark approximately 75-100 yards off the coast. There were no injuries during the evacuation of the beach or from the shark, which swam southeast to deeper water.

The sharks are attracted to this area because of an abundance of gray seals along Cape Cod. Last summer, 141 white sharks were identified near Chatham, MA.



This photo of a Great White shark was taken in New England waters.
Photo by Greg Skomal, Mass Shark Research Project, Mass Division of Fish and Game